

THE EARLY NEW ENGLAND COLONISTS.

AN

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

NEW ENGLAND SOCIETY

OF THE

CITY OF MONTREAL,

DECEMBER 22, 1859

BY

JAMES B. BONAR,

PASTOR OF THE AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MONTREAL; AND CHAPLAIN OF THE SOCIETY.

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MONTREAL, December 23d, 1859.

REV. JAMES B. BONAR,
Chaplain, N. E. S.

DEAR SIR.

On behalf of the Committee of the New England Society, the undersigned beg to offer you their most hearty thanks, for the very able and eloquent oration which you delivered before the Society yesterday, and to solicit a copy of the same for publication.

Very respectfully yours,

JOHN FROTHINGHAM,

President, N. E. S.

JACOB DE WITT,
Secretary.

MONTREAL, January, 1860.

GENTLEMEN,

Grateful for your kindly appreciation of my Address on "Fore Fathers' Day," I may not withhold the copy you request, whatever my opinion of its many defects, which other duties prevent me from attempting to remove. I place it, therefore, at your disposal, with best wishes for your Society and yourselves.

Respectfully and truly yours,

JAMES B. BONAR.

MESSRS. JOHN FROTHINGHAM,
JACOB DE WITT.

ADDRESS.

BRETHREN OF THE NEW ENGLAND SOCIETY :

I CONGRATULATE you on the return of this 22nd day of December. Another year with its hopes, its joys, its opportunities of usefulness has passed away. It has been one of many pleasures to you as individuals : I trust it has also been one of profit and of enlarged usefulness to you as a Society. You have, doubtless, been permitted to aid not a few of your countrymen to return to their friends, or to obtain the necessaries of life. You have been called to mourn the loss of but one of your number—though he was one of your oldest, ablest, and most highly respected countrymen in Montreal. The memory of Jacob De Witt's sturdy New England character, and warm, open-handed interest in the general objects of your Society is still green among us. Doubtless the return of this day reminds you of the loss you have sustained in his departure to the better home. It is cause for devout gratitude that but one of your working members has been taken from you.

The year has been one of external peace and of internal prosperity to our common country. The earth has yielded her increase freely, so that throughout all her borders there is an abundance of food for man and for beast. Commerce has enlarged her sphere—scattering her many blessings with a liberal hand among all classes of the community, while enriching those who are more immediately engaged in her service. The Republican Institutions of our beloved country have been tested during another year : as heretofore

they have proved themselves both suitable and useful. Another State has been added to the Union, and one more Star placed upon our national flag. Within the same period, *two* new Territories have been organized ; and, we trust, that before another return of this anniversary, the Confederacy will be increased by at least *one* new free State, and perhaps by *two*.

During the year, several momentous questions have engaged the attention of our countrymen. Some of these have been amicably adjusted, others remain for future settlement. But there is nothing in the present state of New England to awaken anxiety in the patriotic bosom ; nor in any of the topics before the general public, except, perhaps, the overshadowing one of the Slave power—to betoken danger to the Confederacy. Engrossed in the development of her own wonderful resources, the young giantess of the West pursues her rapid march in the paths of peace and plenty, while the nations of Europe consume their energies and waste their resources in preparing for deadly conflict in a general war. I congratulate you, then, that the return of this hallowed day finds the Pilgrims' children everywhere enjoying, in an ever increasing abundance, those rich blessings which only their Fore Fathers' God can bestow. Bands of our brethren will to-day assemble in almost every city on this continent, and in many of the cities of Europe ; while they look back with honest pride, they will also regard the present state of our country with lively gratitude, and look forward with earnest anticipations of a yet greater glory, a larger prosperity, and more extensive freedom. May every return of this day strengthen their faith and brighten their anticipations !

We instinctively love to remember those who have filled important places, or performed heroic actions in the past. We naturally delight to mark the days on which have occurred events pregnant with rich blessings to us or to our race. The history of the past supplies us with many persons and events worthy of being gratefully remembered and annually commemorated. Every nation has several such anniversaries. We honor them for honoring their an-

cestors; we think the better of them for frequently recalling the noble characters, and mentioning the heroic achievements of those from whom their advantages come. And you, brethren of New England, delight to do the same.

The patriotic John Adams remarked, that "the Fourth of July, 1776, was a memorable epoch, to be commemorated as the day of deliverance,—to be solemnized with pomp, shows, bonfires, and illuminations from one end of the continent to another, throughout all generations." He was, doubtless, correct. But to my mind the day we celebrate—the 22nd December, 1620,—the day when the national existence of New England began—marks a grander epoch, still more worthy of being commemorated by us, and by our successors for ever. Lord Chatham's remark respecting the members of the first Continental Congress, is even more true of those who on this day landed at Plymouth: "he had never," he said, "heard or read of any body of men superior, or indeed equal to them, in all that constitutes mental greatness and moral worth."—This we may honestly say of the Pilgrims. On this account, the anniversary of their disembarkation has long been regularly celebrated in prose and in verse, in sermon, in oration, and in poem—a patriotic and religious duty, to which have been consecrated the highest efforts of many of the noblest and purest minds ever produced by the country to whose colonization they led the way. And you, gentlemen, though residing prosperously and contentedly under the honored flag of Old England, would not forget the virtues or the deeds of those to whom we and the world are indebted for much of our virtue and nearly all our happiness. By this annual celebration you would teach your children to know and reverence the stock from which they are sprung, and to glory in the name of American.

In your first annual address, you listened to an eloquent discourse on the vision of the Pilgrims. Your second one was a most searching analysis representing individuality, originality, and conscientiousness as the sources of the Pilgrim's character. Your last was an exhi-

bition of the present state and prospects of our country, or the vision accomplished. In these three able and timely discourses you have had presented the leading historic facts connected with the day we celebrate. But the subject is a large one, on which we may profitably linger. In full view, therefore, of your previous addresses I would to-day, without making any attempt at oratorical display, direct your attention to some of the leading traits of the Pilgrims and other early New England Colonists. I am encouraged to do this from the position I hold as your Chaplain, and from the conviction that some of these traits are greatly needed at the present time. Another reason I find in the fact, that grave popular misapprehensions exist on this subject. History is not read so generally, nor are its statements so clearly apprehended as we might expect them to be in this boasted nineteenth century. All admit the early New England Colonists to have been great and good men, worthy of our reverence; yet there is a wide-spread feeling that there was much in their principles that was stern, much in their character that was unlovely, and many things in their practice which need to be excused. This feeling, unworthy of us and dishonoring to the Fathers, originates in an imperfect knowledge of the men and of the facts in their history.

The *sixteenth* century was an age calculated to form and develop characters of the most wonderful combinations. The art of printing, then only in its infancy, had begun to exert its marvellous power over the world's intellect. Mind was aroused from its long torpor, and an insatiable thirst for knowledge awakened. The spirit of investigation was abroad as never before. Men called in question everything—being desirous of understanding the foundations of every civil, moral, and religious claim. The vigorous attacks of the Lion hearted Reformers upon the Roman Catholic system, and their zealous proclamation of the long forgotten truths of the glorious Gospel of Christ, greatly aided in producing and fostering this free spirit of independent enquiry. It was an age of keen and often of bitter controversy—one party demanding the fullest submission of heart

and intellect, the other claiming the largest right of private judgment in all things civil and religious. And the unwise course pursued by the different princes who then exercised authority over the nations, only strengthened this tendency and increased the turmoil. Ignorant of the spirit of the age, and jealous of any encroachment upon their extensive and long established prerogatives, they haughtily oppressed the people, and arbitrarily sought to crush the new-born, but deathless, spirit of free enquiry. They would make no concessions to the people, now fully awakened to a sense of their rights and a perception of their wrongs.

While these internal struggles convulsed the nations, each kingdom was at the same time arrayed against every other. It was an age in which the lust for territorial conquest and national aggrandizement burned very fiercely. Holland and England had penetrated to India, concerning the wealth of which fabulous notions were then entertained. America, recently discovered, excited the cupidity of all Europe. England and France, Spain and Holland, all looked to it with eager desires of that gold which was believed to be here in unlimited abundance. Each nation sought to outstrip and to enrich itself at the expense of its neighbors. Take it all together, the age was one of marked peculiarities, all tending to form characters of the most singular description. To men, living in such circumstances, the greatest danger perhaps was that of running into extremes and extravagancies. They were apt to take one-sided views, and to form characters destitute of aught like symmetry.—And this was in very many cases the actual result. Think of the open, unblushing wickedness of one class, and the rigid ascetism of another—the confessed dissoluteness and the stern morality—the worship and the contempt of wealth—the cruelty of the persecutor and the patient endurance of the martyr—the lovely piety of many of the Non-Conformists and the wild, absurd opinions of the various Sectaries that then flourished: think of these things, and you will clearly apprehend that the tendency of the age was to drive men to extremes, to lead them to form most extravagant principles and

characters. It was an age of rapid and great transition, fraught with vast danger to individual character and social habits. Moderation was then as now, a virtue most greatly needed, and yet most difficult of attainment.

It was in such circumstances that the Pilgrims and early Colonists of New England were cradled. Their strength, symmetry, and beauty of character can be properly appreciated only as seen against this dark back-ground. Amidst the greatest extremes, they were characterized, in most things, by marked and decided *moderation*. It is a virtue little noted and seldom mentioned, yet one of the most useful, and the rarest in this world of one-sidedness. As will appear throughout, moderation was truly a characteristic of the Pilgrims.

It is well known that piety—*reverence for Deity*—was one of the most marked characteristics of the early New England Colonists.—They were not negative men in anything, least of all in this respect. They were decidedly *religious* men. Every one of those who landed at Plymouth from the Mayflower, was a professing Christian. Their piety pervaded their entire lives, formed their characters, and influenced them in all their actions. It was this that led them first to Holland and then to New England. They can be appreciated and understood only as their religious character is apprehended. It has been well said, * “They were men whose minds had derived a peculiar tone and elevation from the daily contemplation of superior beings and eternal interests. They were not content with acknowledging an over-ruling Providence in general terms, as the custom is, but they habitually ascribed every event to the will of that Great Being for whose power nothing was too vast, for whose inspection nothing was too minute. To know, to serve, to enjoy *Him* was with them the one great end of existence. They rejected with contempt the ceremonious homage, which others substituted for the pure worship of the soul. Instead of being content with catching occasional glimpses of Deity through an obscuring veil, they aspired to gaze

* Edinburgh Review, vol. xlii. p. 339.

full on the intolerable brightness, and to commune with *Him* face to face. From this came their contempt of earthly distinctions. The difference between the greatest and meanest of mankind seemed to vanish, when compared with the boundless interval which separated the whole race from *Him* on whom their own eyes were constantly fixed. They recognized no title to superiority but the divine favor, and themselves confident of that they despised all the blandishments and dignities of the world. If their names were not found in the registers of heralds they felt assured they were recorded in the Book of Life. If their steps were not attended by a splendid train of obsequious menials, legions of ministering angels had charge over them. Their palaces were houses not made with hands; their diadems, crowns of glory that should never fade away. On the rich and the eloquent, on nobles and priests they looked down with mingled pity and contempt, for they esteemed themselves rich in a more precious treasure, and eloquent in a more sublime language; nobles by the right of a new creation, and priests by the imposition of a mightier hand. In their estimation, the very meanest of themselves was a being, to whose fate a mysterious and terrible importance belonged,—on whose slightest action the spirits of light and darkness looked with anxious interest, who had been destined before the heavens and the earth were created to enjoy a felicity which should continue when heaven and earth should have passed away. Events, which short-sighted politicians ascribed to earthly causes, had been ordained on his account. For his sake empires had risen and flourished, and decayed. For his sake the Almighty had proclaimed his will, by the pen of the Evangelist and the harp of the Prophet. He had been rescued by no common Deliverer from the grasp of no common foe. He had been ransomed by the sweat of no vulgar agony, by the blood of no earthly sacrifice. It was for him that the sun had been darkened, that the rocks had been rent, that the dead had arisen, that all nature had shuddered at the suffering of her expiring God.

In view of such facts, and sustained by such inspiring principles,

the Pilgrims lived. It was through these, to them honestly believed and vividly apprehended truths, that their moderation was made to appear unto all, while with a holy enthusiasm and fearless contempt of earthly dangers they pursued their pilgrimage to that better country which they believed to be reserved for them ; these were assuredly their grand, central, over-ruling principles. Theirs were lives of faith. Their piety was their grandest and most distinguishing characteristic. It was that which enabled them to do and to dare more than other men : it was that through which they accomplished the most for the world, and for you their descendants. It ought never to be overlooked or unmentioned on this anniversary.

You will allow me to say, without referring in the most remote degree to the theological bearings of the subject, that the type of the Pilgrims' piety was a very noble one. Being founded in clear views of what they honestly regarded as divine truth, and in deep heart experiences, it was neither silly and sentimental, nor barren and selfish. Their piety did not consist mainly in dogmas nor chiefly in externals ; it had as much reality as semblance ; more substance than form ; more vitality than beauty ; and, it may have been, more strength than tenderness. I should say it was a soul permeating emotion, created by an influential principle, rather than a benevolent action founded on a sparkling sentiment. It bore a much closer resemblance to the motive of a man laboring for a purpose, than to that of a child at play ; it was a spring morning's resolution, rather than an autumn evening's reverie. "A Christian is the highest style of man." The Pilgrims were of the noblest type of Christians. I need not remind you, gentlemen, that the impress of this exalted type of piety is still seen in many places throughout New England, and wherever the descendants of the Pilgrims have wandered. May we do them honor by imitating them in this their noblest and most marked characteristic.

The Pilgrims and other early New England Colonists were distinguished hardly more for their piety, than for their extensive knowledge and love of solid learning. They were picked men, very

different from the mass of later emigrants. The early settlers of Plymouth, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Haven numbered among them many persons eminent for their learning and distinguished for their personal condition. Carver, the first Governor of Plymouth, was prominent on account of his elevated character and of the large property which he liberally used for the advancement of that cause for which he staked, and finally sacrificed his life.—William Bradford, a name honored by every descendant of the Pilgrims, although a self-taught man, was familiar with the Dutch and Flemish languages, and well versed in Latin and Greek. Being eager, as he tells us, “to see the ancient oracles of God in their native beauty,” he employed his leisure hours in the study of Hebrew. Cotton, one of the most learned men of his time, was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he was eminently distinguished for his scholastic attainments. He wrote Latin with elegance, was a critic in Greek, and so conversant with Hebrew as to be able to discourse in that ancient language. Brewster, the steadfast and devout Elder, who, in time of famine, gave thanks to God that he and his family were permitted “to suck of the abundance of the seas and of the treasures hid in the sands,”—was at one time connected with the British embassy in Holland. Like many of his fellow Pilgrims, he had been educated at the University of Cambridge. Higginson was a graduate of Emmanuel College. Eaton and Hopkins had been eminent merchants in London. Davenport, a scholar distinguished at Oxford, and a preacher of wide celebrity in England, was throughout life eminent alike for virtue and learning. The brave Edward Winslow, who offered himself as a hostage for his Colony in their first interview with Mas-sas-so-it, the savage but estimable monarch of Mount Hope, and who sacrificed his life in that unfortunate expedition sent by Cromwell against the Spaniards in the West Indies, was possessed of large fortune and extensive information. The eloquent Hooker, one of the founders of the Connecticut Colony, was educated at Cambridge. Stone, his associate, and a graduate of the same University, was one of the most

accurate logicians of his age—celebrated not more for his acuteness than for humour, wit, and pleasantry. Winthrop, a name honored by many illustrious men, although the heir to a fine estate, was educated for the law. But I need not enlarge the catalogue. If we look at the whole body of the emigrants by the Mayflower and Speedwell, the Arbella, the Ambrose, the Talbot, and the Jewell, we can no where find names more eminent for prudence and forecast, or more remarkable for intelligence, enterprise, and courage. They were the intimate friends and life long correspondents of Baxter and Howe, and Selden and Milton, and other luminaries among the Puritans of England. They proved their appreciation of solid learning by the establishment of schools and academies for all the youth of the Colonies, as well as for their own children. Two centuries ago they inaugurated a school system vastly superior to any that has ever yet been established in their Fatherland, or in any of the other countries of Europe. The University of Harvard was founded at great expense, for men in their circumstances, only eight years after the first settlement of Massachusetts Colony.

Their great prudence and extensive knowledge may, I think, be gathered from that document which they drew up and signed on the day of their arrival in Cape Cod Harbor. This constitution or fundamental law—framed before they set foot on the New England soil—was the precursor, or seminal principle, of all those wonderful efforts that have since been made to fix the foundations of independent, voluntary, self-governing communities or states. Its adoption in such trying circumstances exhibited the great intelligence, the wonderful prudence and forecast of that brave little band of Pilgrims. The document itself ought to be printed in letters of gold above every bench of justice, and on the front of every State House in New England.

Their prudence and intelligence appear in the laws which they from time to time enacted. These seem wonderful, considering the then existing state of jurisprudence in England. They were Englishmen—be it remembered—warmly attached to all the institutions and to

most of the forms of their native country. Yet they did not allow themselves to be trammelled by British precedent. They seem to have looked at law in the abstract as containing rules of civil government for free and intelligent men, who were imposing just restraints upon themselves rather than lording it over others. With a fearless neglect of ancient customs, and of forms rendered sacred by antiquity, they began a system of legal reform so soon as they trod the New England soil. They affected no disregard for the wisdom or learning of their ancestors; they made no pretensions to any better knowledge of man's true social position than that which prevailed in England; nevertheless, with a steady eye upon ancient precedents and English usage, they began a system of legal change, radical yet conservative. They opened the BIBLE and sought to form laws in accordance only with its spirit and precepts. A high authority has said: "The known defects in the laws and practises of England, pointed out and forcibly stated by Lord Brougham in his great Law Reform Speeches, were discovered and banished from the New England Colonies by their first settlers. Nor are there any essential changes or improvements, called for by that eminent English Statesman, which were not actually adopted by one or another of the early New England Colonies."

I might here mention many instances, collected from various quarters, of their wisdom in legal reforms—some of which are still being vainly sought for in other countries. Take, for example, the subject of imprisonment for debt, one of the most barbarous usages of the darkest night of the Middle Ages—a law only very slightly modified by our own Canadian Parliament at its last Session. In 1650, it was enacted in Connecticut that "no person should be imprisoned for any debt or fine, except when there appeared to be some estate which he would not produce." Nor was this a mere theory or a dead letter. It is a proud boast that no honest debtor was ever confined in a Connecticut prison. Thus also in a case of bankruptcy, no preference or priority of claim was admitted; the law directed that all attachments should inure to the benefit of all creditors in

proportion to their respective claims. The justice of this is obvious, and yet there are places, as you gentlemen know, where it has not even yet been adopted.

Take another illustration from the law of juries. The Lord Chief Justice of England is even now agitating a reform which was accomplished two centuries ago in one of the New England Colonies. They enacted that juries might consist of *six* or *twelve* persons, according to the importance of the subject to be brought before them, and that the decision of four out of the six, or eight of the twelve, should be conclusive, unless a new trial was granted. By this they sought to avoid that expense, delay, and injury which the demand for absolute unanimity in the minds of twelve men so often produces to all parties concerned.

Besides this, legal forms were simplified. Wise and equal laws were provided for a just distribution of estates among children and heirs, while primogenitures were entirely abolished; and no reform has proved a greater blessing to the country than this. The criminal laws of Europe, at that time truly Draconian, were greatly softened, though doubtless not so much as they ought to have been. Nevertheless, great and much needed reforms were made in the whole system of jurisprudence by the early Colonists. Many of their reforms have already been adopted in other countries as well as incorporated into the constitutions of the States that have since been formed. The world has thus pronounced its verdict as to their wisdom and intelligence in founding States and governing communities.

Much ridicule has been cast upon the founders of the New Haven Colony, on account of the supposed character of what are known as the "Blue Laws of Connecticut." It has often been said and sung that they contain grave enactments against offending beer barrels, and that the austerity of Puritan practice prohibited a young husband from smiling upon his blushing wife, or a mother from kissing her babe on a Sunday. The few who have read these laws, declare that there is nothing in them that is not moderate, wise and

prudent—clearly founded upon a commandment of which no one will venture to dispute the wisdom. In fact, the wisest and best men in New York and Philadelphia are even now attempting to enforce just such wise and salutary Sabbath laws; and *nineteen-twentieths* of the population approve and sustain them in this course. The moderation, as well as the wisdom, of these early Colonists appear in their laws and rules of government no less clearly than in their well regulated lives. It is to be regretted—to-day we may confess it—their successors have not always possessed as much wisdom, nor manifested equal moderation in the laws which they have enacted; yet the New England States are confessedly among the most moral and best, because least, governed communities in the world.

I would mention as traits belonging to the first New England Colonists, the love of peace and order in connection with respect for the rights of others. I mention these together, because charges have often been preferred against them, which, to me, seem to be unjust and unwarranted by the facts. They manifested no disposition to force their opinions upon others, or to infringe upon the rights of any. They would not separate from the Church of England.—They sought only its reform in matters of practice. And even this they did not seek in an illiberal spirit or uncharitable manner. John Robinson, in his last charge, advised them “by all means to endeavour to close with the godly party of the kingdom of England, and rather to study union than division, namely how near we might possibly, without sin, close with them, than in the least measure to affect division or separation from them.” Winslow testifies that John Robinson “professed and held communion both with the French and Dutch Churches, yea tendered it even to the Scotch also.” While they claimed toleration and the right of private judgment, they were willing that others should enjoy the same privileges. They removed from Amsterdam to Leyden that they might not be the occasion of disturbance to the brethren whom they found in the former city. No charge of bigotry or intolerance can be sustained against them in aught that they said or did previous

to their settlement in New England. It will soon appear that this may also be said of them in their after course.

Their dealings with the Indians were on the whole praiseworthy, considering the sentiments then prevalent and the course pursued by some of the other Colonists of America. They not only obtained grants from the English government, but they were ever mindful of the rights of the Indians: while they restrained their ferocity and checked their aggressions, they endeavoured upon every occasion to protect them in their just dues and privileges. It is matter of the most familiar history, that previous to the arrival of the Mayflower at Plymouth, the whole country, bordering upon the coast and extending far inland, had been desolated by a pestilence, so that it was nearly if not quite depopulated. It was about two weeks after their first landing at Cape Cod before the Pilgrims met with Samoset—the first native that appeared. He informed them that four years before their arrival, all the Indians of that vicinity had died of an extraordinary disease, so that there was “neither man nor woman, nor child remaining.”

On the 22nd day of March, 1621, Mas-sas-soit—the ruler of all the nations in that vicinity—came with sixty armed men to Plymouth. With him the Pilgrims made a treaty, consisting of six articles, which was kept with good faith on both sides during the chief's life, and for twenty years afterwards. For more than half a century after the arrival of the Mayflower, the Pilgrims and their descendants lived in peace and friendship with the natives, undisturbed by outbreaks or lawless aggressions. Canonicus, chief of the Narragansetts, early manifested jealousy of them and laid plans for their destruction; but these were frustrated by the other Indians. Until after Phillip's war, the settlers of Plymouth never claimed nor obtained any lands belonging to the Indians by violence or conquest. Their titles were all derived by deeds and grants from the natives. This was likewise true of the first settlers in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. The *first* Colonists dealt honestly and kindly with these sons of the forest, seeking to unite

them in friendship to themselves and to each other. One instance may suffice to show their mode of dealing where the Indians were concerned. During a time of severe famine a quantity of corn was found in a cave. Before it was used, a diligent but useless search was made for the owner. Months afterwards he was discovered, and paid three-fold. Whatever may be said of the other or later settlers of this continent, the Forefathers of New England at least dealt honestly by the Red Man.

It has ever seemed to me that the common representation of the course of the Colonists towards Roger Williams and the Quakers is not the most correct one. It is by these that the charge of bigotry and intolerance is mainly sought to be sustained.

To obtain correct views on this, you must remember the Pilgrims did not cross the Atlantic to form a settlement where men of all shades of opinion should be tolerated. They came for the express purpose and with the avowed intention of forming a separate organization, a community of their own, to be governed by their well-known principles. The grants gave them an exclusive title to the lands which they were to occupy, with an uncontrolled right to establish laws for its government. They owned all that tract of country lying east of the present State of Rhode Island and south of Massachusetts, which was at first bounded by Charles River and the Merrimac. Within these limits they had absolute dominion. To this spot they invited none except those who thought as they did upon law and religion. Hence Plymouth early passed laws prohibiting persons from settling within her bounds without a license from the magistrates. They sought to keep out the elements of discord by excluding those who were likely to introduce them. They had braved many dangers to obtain a quiet home. They were certainly justified in seeking by all lawful means to preserve it.

Roger Williams* was banished in 1635, after a residence of five

* See Palfrey's Hist. of N. E., vol. i., p. 405-425, where the various authorities are given in full. This is confessedly the best and only thorough history of New England.

years in the Colony, not for his religious opinions, but because he was opposing the principles on which the Colony was founded and sowing discord among the settlers. "Our fathers," says John Quincy Adams, "turned Mr. Williams out of doors, because he was tearing their house to pieces." Dr. Worcester says, "Roger Williams was not banished for being a baptist; for he never was a baptist in Massachusetts." I desire to speak charitably of Roger Williams. He, doubtless, had more correct views than his compeers of the connection that ought to exist between church and state; but he was a partizan with very little fixedness of principle. Bradford says he was "a man godly and zealous, having many precious parts, but very unsettled in his judgment." He insisted that the brethren in Boston should declare their repentance for having communed with the Church of England before they left that country. He openly taught that no one should pray with an impenitent person,—not even though it should be his own wife or child or parent. He proclaimed that oaths should not be administered to those who were not members of churches; thus virtually excluding such persons from office, and also obstructing the whole course of justice. He insisted that the title of the Colony to its lands was not good, and openly preached against it. All this is well authenticated. Being warned not to assert these dangerous opinions publicly, he set the authorities at open defiance. Then the sentence of banishment was passed upon him in October, with the understanding that it would not be enforced until spring, provided he remained quiet, which his restless disposition would not permit him to do. He therefore fled to Rhode Island to escape being sent back to England. In all this, it seems to me, the Fathers dealt not only lawfully and prudently, but tenderly even with the founder of Rhode Island. If it had been in England, he would have been whipped at the market place and then cast into prison.

The Quakers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were no more like the gentle, law-abiding Friends of the present, than the latter are like the Mormons. The former were ranters and fanatics,

disturbers of public peace and decency. They were in the habit of entering the churches—"steeple houses," as they called them,—during the time of service for the purpose of insulting the ministers and disturbing the worship. An old writer says, "They invaded public places, uttering their wild exhortations and foaming forth their mad opinions, like persons possessed; disturbing also the relations of private life, and meddling everywhere with matters beyond the pale of propriety or even common decency." It was, doubtless, against such disturbers of the peace as these that the often-blamed laws of the colonies were directed. A careful examination of the facts respecting the persons punished, will, I think, show that the Fathers of New England, instead of being bigoted or intolerant, were only the strict supporters of order and good morals. Doubtless, some of their laws were stern, and often enforced with what would now be regarded as unnecessary severity. But that was true of all the governments of that period. We claim only that the laws established and enforced by the early Colonists were milder and more moderate than those then executed in Europe. Their most unjustifiable laws against witchcraft were simply copies from the Statute Book of England. And even this law was a dead letter in the Colonies ever after 1676, while in Britain witches were punished as late as 1725. The moderation of the Fathers appears in striking contrast with the intolerance which then prevailed in every country of Europe—Holland alone excepted. They were human, and therefore imperfect, as they themselves were ever most ready to confess. They lived in circumstances of peculiar difficulty, yet they let their moderation, their intelligence, and their piety appear in everything. They were so simple minded and unambitious that the Colony of Plymouth found it necessary to enact a law imposing a fine of twenty pounds sterling upon whomsoever, on being elected, should refuse to serve as governor. They desired only to live in peace, in the free exercise of what they justly regarded as high privileges, and in earnest efforts to honor the Great Being, whose smile of approval was their most coveted reward. They

hated nothing so much as intolerance, and feared only God's displeasure. Take them altogether, there is hardly anything to be excused, while there is much that is worthy of imitation and praise. They left their children the noble heritage of a good name and a virtuous example, as well as a goodly country and free institutions. Their heroic, self sacrificing virtues ought to be, and will be held in everlasting remembrance. They acted fully up to the light which they possessed, while they eagerly sought for more.

It is true, brethren of the New England Society, your ancestors were noble men, animated by lofty principles, and engaged in a holy cause. The contest in which they wore out their lives was begun on Calvary. It was a contest between light and darkness, freedom and despotism. In that struggle they nobly fought, and more nobly suffered, even while gaining most decided advantages. But, gentlemen, they were not permitted to end the struggle. The contest has been proceeding ever since; it is still continued; and now it rages more fiercely than ever. Many victories have been gained during these two centuries; the battle field is now greatly enlarged, and every day becoming larger. New and more definite issues are being made, and new peoples enlisted in the conflict. But the contest is the same;—darkness and despotism on the one side, light and liberty on the other. The Forefathers of New England ranged themselves under the banner of light and liberty: that banner, never dishonoured by themselves, they bequeathed to their descendants to be honourably carried forward to victory. A holy trust! and one which the children have nobly kept, so that to-day no despot rules, and no slave clanks his chains in New England. Nobly are the children treading in the Fathers' footsteps. Long ago they penetrated to the mighty West, carrying knowledge and liberty with them. They secured the freedom of Kansas. They have imbued all those noble Western States with a mighty spirit of liberty that must prevail. Even now they are settling in Western Virginia. Armed only with the Bible and an all conquering spirit of love, they still pursue the Pilgrims' path. Gentlemen, the con-

test may be long ; but while the sons of New England wield the Pilgrims' weapons, success will attend them. The Forefathers' God will yet, in answer to the childrens' prayers, deliver the confederacy from its every danger,—including that of slavery. The Divine blessing is pledged to them for thousands of generations : the higher law insures their success so long as moderation and love direct their counsels and animate their efforts. I am well assured that the warm heart and prudent intellect of New England are both truly enlisted in this contest, whether waged in her own, or in other countries. Her children have gone to all quarters of the earth as the heralds of light and the messengers of salvation. She watches eagerly the heroic efforts of Old England, who, engaged in the same contest, is ranged on the same side as herself. She loves Old England for the Fathers' sake, as well as for her noble principles ; should the despots, now arming, dare to invade the land of the Pilgrims' birth, there are thousands of the Pilgrims' children ready to cross the Atlantic, as their Fathers did, in behalf of the right. Old England and New England are one in heart and one in effort for God and light and liberty. Certain I am, that the men of New England, resident in Montreal, will, on this day especially, heartily unite in the prayer with which I conclude : Thus may it ever be, till the Pilgrims' principles shall fill the world and govern our race ! And peace and love and friendship reign through all the earth !

“ Our Fathers' God ! to Thee,
 Author of liberty !
 To Thee we turn ;
 Long may our land be bright
 With freedom's holy light ;
 Protect us by thy might,
 Great God, our King !